ISRAEL NATURE AND PARKS AUTHORITY

Hermon Stream (Banias) Nature Reserve

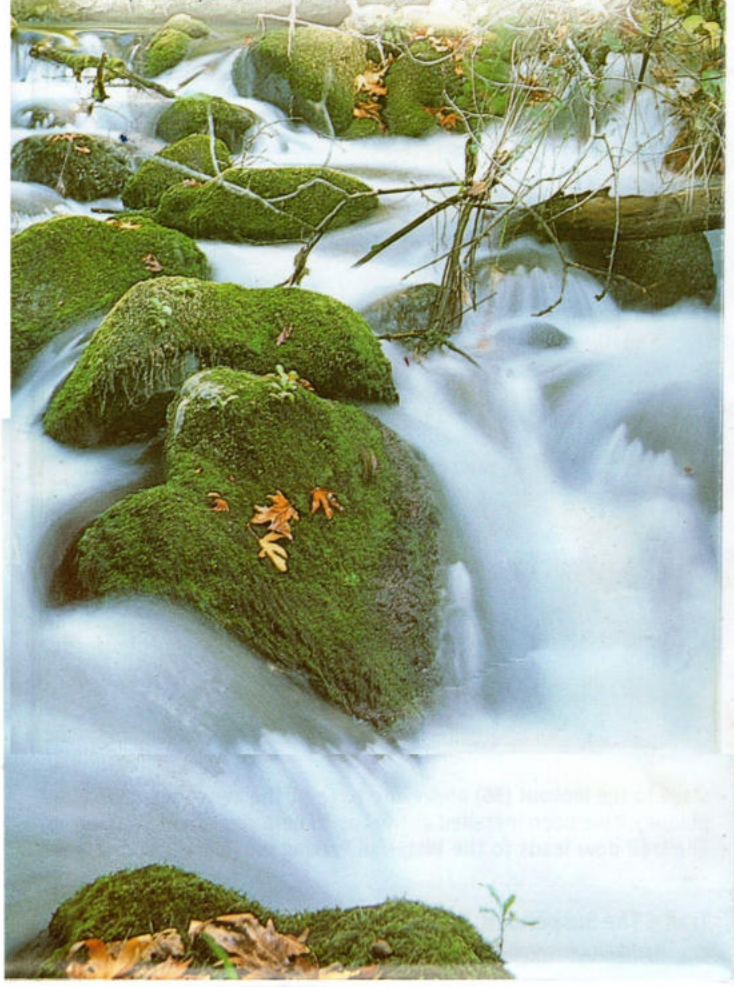
www.parks.org.il | *3639 |

Welcome to the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve (Banias)

The Hermon Spring emerges at the foot of Mount Hermon, whose peak is 2814 meters above sea level. This giant mountain acts like a sponge, absorbing the rain and snow that falls generously upon it. The water percolates through the limestone until it emerges as springs at the foot of the mountain. These springs create the Dan, Hermon (Banias), and Senir (Hazbani) streams, which are the headwaters of the Jordan.

The headwaters of the Jordan were declared a nature reserve in the1960s. The waters of the Hermon Stream are used for irrigation, but only after they have flowed through the heart of lush vegetation that provides shelter for many kinds of animals.

Historical ruins are also respectfully cared for here. The Israel Nature and Parks Authority develops and conserves the ruins of the ancient city of Paneas, which are an important and inseparable part of the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve.



Rules of Behavior in the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve

- Every stone, plant, and inanimate object is part of the landscape. Do not add or remove anything!
- The reserve is off-limits to pets (dogs and others)!
- For your convenience, there is a shaded rest area at the entrance to the reserve.
- Eating and drinking are permitted in the rest area only!
- Please keep the area clean. Do not leave refuse in the reserve; throw all refuse into the bins provided!
- Do not harm the antiquities and the ruins in any way; do not carve on them or otherwise deface them!
- Avoid excessive noise that will frighten away the animals!
- Fishing is prohibited in the reserve!
- The lighting of fires is prohibited, except in designated areas! No smoking¡
- During winter, mud can make the paths slippery.
- Climbing on the walls of the antiquities is prohibited!
- A special walkers path has been prepared for you - please do not go off the path!
- Do not throw or roll stones!
- Entering the water and swimming are prohibited!
- It is prohibited to enter or remain in the reserve after closing hours!
- Obey the instructions of the rangers!

Following these rules will ensure a pleasant stay for you and for those who come after you.

The rangers and other reserve staff will be happy to answer any and all questions. Please do not hesitate to approach them.

Visiting Hours:

Daily 08:00-17:00 (Last entrance at 16:00).
On Fridays and holiday eves the reserve closes one hour earlier.
Winter hours: 08:00-16:00 (Last entrance at 15:00).

Banias Springs, Tel: 04-6902577
Banias Waterfalls-Suspended Trail, Tel:/Fax: 04-6950272

Text: The suspended trail - Yaacov Shkolnik
English Translation: Miriam Feinberg Vamosh
Photos: Israel Nature and Parks Authority Archives; Nisim Doron
Drawing of map and artist's rendering of the Temple of Pan: Shalom Kavler
Production: Adi Greenbaum
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The Stream

The Hermon Stream receives its water from the southern slopes of Mount Hermon and the northern Golan. Its catchment basin is small – only about 150 square kilometers. Its main tributaries, the Sa'ar Stream (Wadi Hashba), the Si'on Stream (Wadi Asal) and the Guvta Stream, contribute about 20% of the annual flow of the Hermon Stream, which amounts to approximately 125 million cubic meters of water (one-fourth of the water of the Jordan). Most of the water emerges as springs at the base of the Banias Cave.

The water of the Hermon Stream emerges at a chilling 15°C and flows into large and beautifully renovated natural pools. At its starting point, the Hermon Stream flows forcefully through a steep canyon for about three kilometers. The steep gradient creates a powerful flow, allowing the stream to dig deeply into the canyon and produce waterfalls. The largest is the Banias Waterfall, a vigorous, ten-meter-high cascade. Before the Hermon Stream enters the Hula Valley, its gradient becomes more moderate, but the channel still retains its wild character. In the Hula Valley, fields are cultivated right up to the banks of the stream; at times only a narrow strip of poplar (*Populus alba*), willow (*Salix acmophylla*), and holy bramble (*Rubus sanctus*) separates the fields from the water. Nine kilometers to the south, near Kibbutz Sde Nehemia, the Hermon Stream reaches its junction with the Dan Stream, and the two unite to form the Jordan.

The Banias Spring

Vegetation

One of the glories of the Hermon Stream is the forest on its banks. The most common trees are oriental plane tree (*Platanus orientalis*), willow (*Salix acmophylla*), Syrian ash (*Fraxinus syriaca*), and European nettle (*Celtis australis*). The oriental plane tree, which can reach a height of 15 meters, is certainly the most impressive.

Poplars

The oriental plane tree and the willow typically grow near year-round rivers. The oriental plane tree is easy to spot by its large leaves, shaped like the palm of a hand, which it sheds in the winter, and by its ball-shaped "long-haired" fruit. The willow, on the other hand, generally grows without a main trunk, but rather from several trunks. Sometimes the roots are exposed and can be recognized by their red hue. The Syrian ash also grows along the banks of streams, and can be recognized by its dentate leaflets.

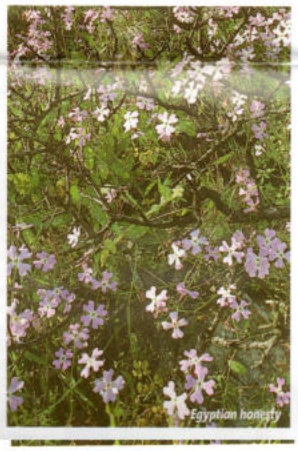
At the end of the winter and in spring, the cliff above the Temple of Pan is covered with a profusion of Egyptian honesty (*Ricotia lunaria*), hyacinth squill (*Scilla hyacinthoides*), and a variety of other spring flowers. Rich cliff vegetation takes advantage of every nook and cranny with a pocket of soil. Among the plants found here are common pennywort (*Umblicus intermedius*), wall pellitory (*Parietaria judaica*), and ferns such as scaly spleenwort (*Ceterach officinarum*) and lip fern (*Cheilanthes pteridioides*). Around the waterfall, blue lupin (*Lupinus pilosus*) and Persian cyclamen (*Cyclamen persicum*) can be seen.

Oriental plane tree

Kermes oak

In fall, the small-flowered pancratium (*Pancratium parviflorum*) abound, as well as colchium and crocus. The poplar is one of the planted trees that grows in the reserve. Because it shoots up quickly, the villagers utilized its straight trunk to build the roofs of their houses.
Visitors to the reserve will often see fruit trees, remnants of abandoned orchards. Among the fruit trees are figs, walnut, date and mullbery. Grape vines often entwine themselves in the trees. The area around the spring is rich in water-loving vegetation such as the great willow-herb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), common hemp agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*), blue water speedwell (*Veronica anagallis-aquatica*), and common bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*). Mediterranean species such as Kermes oak (*Quercus calliprinos*), Mt.Tabor oak (*Quercus ithaburensis*), Terebinth tree (*Pistacia palaestina*), Officinal storax (*Styrax officinalis*), True laurel (*Laurus nobilis*) also abound.

The Hermon Stream


Egyptian honesty

Common bur-reed

Great Willow-Herb

Purple loostrife

The Animal World

The animal world in the reserve is rich. Syrian rock hyrax (*Procavia capensis*), the most common animals, love to sun themselves on the jumble of large boulders. Among the nocturnal animals in the reserve are the wild boar (*Sus scrofa*), the golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), the beech marten (*Martes foina*), the broad-toothed rock mouse (*Apodemus mystacinus*), and a number of other species of rodents and bats.

A Syrian hyrax (Procavia capensis)

Flocks of rock doves (*Columba livia*) make their nests in clefts in the spring cave. Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and blue rock thrush (*Monticola solitarius*) are also common. Among the birds inhabiting the thickets near the water's edge are Cetti's warbler (*Cettia cetti*), Sardinian warbler (*Sylvia melanocephala*), wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), and graceful prinia (*Prinia gracilis*). Various species of fish live in the stream, among them haffaf (*Capoeta damascina*), loach (Neomachilus jordanicus). Various species of barbs (*Barbus longiceps and Barbus canus*). and the black-shelled melanopsis (*Melanopsis praemorsa jordanica*) snail also inhabits the water, as does the Theodoxus snail (*Theodoxus jordani jordani*).

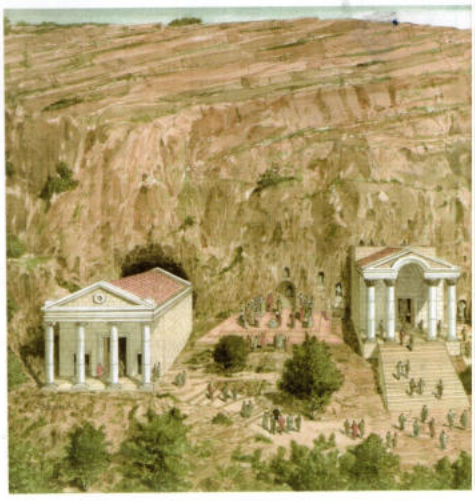
The haffaf (Capoeta damsacina)

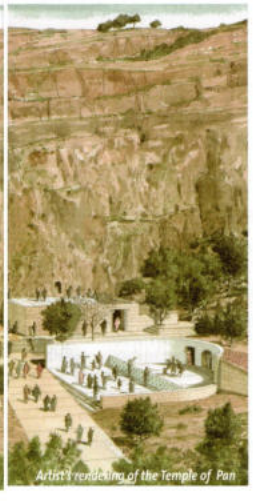
Remnants of the Past
By Professor Vasilis Tsafiris

After the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, Greek culture was brought to the East and our region fell under its allure. Here, next to the flowing spring and the rich vegetation, the Panaeon was constructed, a temple to the god Pan, who lived in nature. The name of the place was taken from the name of the deity: Paneas or Pameas (Banias, according to the Arabic pronunciation).

The Temple of Pan

Paneas first appears in the works of the historian Xenon of Rhodes. He tells about a battle that took place at **Paneas** in the year 200 BCE, between the Selucids and the Ptolomies, who were fighting for control of the Land of Israel.




Artist's rendering of the Temple of Pan

At the end of the first century BCE, the Romans annexed Paneas to the kingdom of Herod the Great. The historian of that period, Josephus Flavius, records that Herod built a temple close to the springs, and dedicated it to his patron, the Roman Emperor Augustus.

After Herod's death, his kingdom was divided among his three sons. The north and the Golan Heights were awarded to Philip, who made Paneas the capital of his kingdom in 2 BCE. He called the place Caesarea Philipi, although the popular name Paneas persisted.

Paneas continued to be the capital of the kingdom during the days of Agrippa II (the second half of the first century CE).

Josephus Flavius recorded that Agrippa II made the city very luxurious, adorning it with a large palace and statue-studded temples.

According to Christian tradition, a most significant event occurred at Caesarea Philipi. Here, after Peter stated that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus answered him:

> *"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.*
>
> (Matt 16:17–18).

At this time, Jesus gave Peter the "keys to heaven" (Matt. 16:19). The Church fathers also identified Paneas as the place where Jesus healed the "woman who had been subject to bleeding" (Mark 5:25, Luke 8:43). In gratitude, the woman placed a statue of Jesus at the door of her house. It was apparently the first statue of Jesus ever made.

With the rise of Christianity during the Byzantine period (the beginning of the fourth century CE), Paneas began to change its character. The pagan worship of Pan came to an end, and the temples were abandoned. But the city continued to prosper; many new streets were added, and the palace of Agrippa II became a bathhouse.

After the Muslim conquest in the seventh century CE, Paneas declined into no more than a village. In the tenth century CE Muslim waves of immigration brought renewed settlement to Banias, as it was now called. Jews also came to Banias, and organized themselves into Jerusalem and Babylonian communities. Banias also became an important center for the Karaite sect (an offshoot of Judaism) at that time.

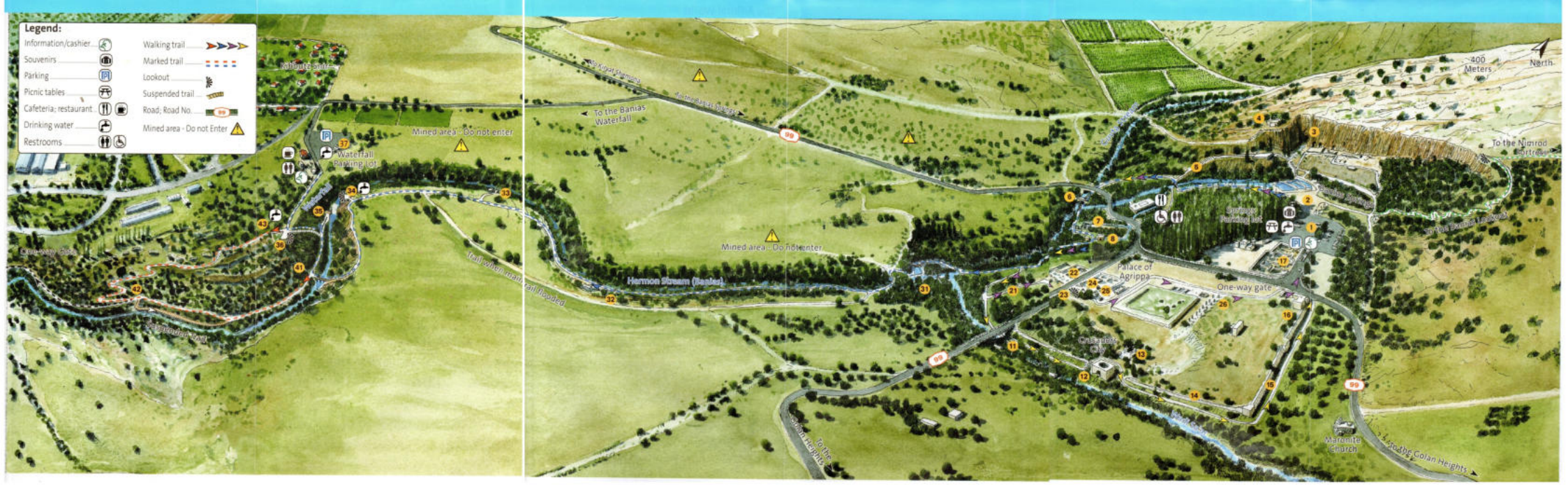
The Crusaders saw Banias as a natural border between their kingdom in Palestine and the neighboring Muslim realm, whose center was Damascus. Because of its position on the crossroads between Sidon and Tyre in Lebanon, and Damascus, Banias was considered a strategic asset. As a response to the Crusader conquest of the Galilee in 1099, the Muslims fortified Banias, and the city was given over to the control of members of the Ismailiya sect. But in 1129, due to internal Muslim quarrels, control of the city was transferred to the Crusaders. The Muslims finally recaptured Banias in 1132.

After Saladin defeated the Crusaders in the 1187 Battle of Hattin, Banias declined in importance. The **Mamluks** fortified the city, but finally abandoned its fortress, which was taken over by belligerent Bedouin chieftains. The great city again became a small village, which it remained until the area was conquered by the IDF in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The Mamluke Gate

Dear Visitor

We hope you will enjoy your visit to the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve. This reserve is just one of many nature reserves and national parks throughout Israel, each with its own special character. We invite you to visit the other nature reserves and national parks in the region: the Yahudiya Forest Nature Reserve, the Gamla Nature Reserve, the Nimrod Fortress National Park, the Hurshat Tal National Park, the 'Iyyon Stream Nature Reserve, the Tel Dan Nature Reserve and the Hula Nature Reserve.



The Hermon Stream Nature Reserve (Banias)

Please note: the numbers that appear on the map are not consecutive.

1. Springs Parking Lot
2. Banias Springs
3. Temple of Pan and Pan's Cave
4. Grave of Nebi Khader
5. Remnant from Herod's Time
6. Roman Bridge
7. Hydroelectric Station
8. Matroof Flour Mill

To the Crusader city and back to the Springs Parking Lot (sites 1-8, 11-17).

11. Destroyed Syrian Bridge
12. Mamluke Gate
13. Grave of Sheikh Sidi Ibrahim
14. Crusader Tower
15. Moat
16. Corner Tower
17. Excavation Area B

Trail 2 (Purple): 45 minutes' walk

To the Palace of Agrippa II and back to the Springs Parking Lot (sites 1-8, 21-26).

21. Entrance to Palace of Agrippa II
22. Underground Passages
23. Lookout Platform
24. Palace of Agrippa II
25. Synagogue
26. Cardo (Colonnaded Street)

Trail 3 (be): 90 minutes' walk

To the Bas Waterfall, ending at the Watell Parking Lot (Sites 1-8, 31-37).

31. "Office Pool"
32. Umm I Flour Mill
33. Jedida ur Mill
34. Watern Lookout
35. Baniasaterfall
36. Lookou
37. Waterf Parking Lot

Trail 4 (Red): 45 minutes' walk

A loop trail, the suspended trail leads to the Banias Waterfall and back to the Waterfall Parking Lot (41-43, 35-37)

41. Trail junction near the waterfall bridge
42. Start of the suspended trail
43. To the suspended trail (loop trail)

Trails in the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve

The numbers in parentheses are the sites as they appear on the map and on the trail.

All trails (except trail 4) first pass the following sites: The Banias Springs, The Temple of Pan and the Cave of Pan, the Roman Bridge, the junction of the Hermon and Guvta Streams, and the Matroof Flour Mill. Beyond the flour mill each trail splits off to its own destination as shown in the brochure and on the map.

The walk through the reserve begins at the Banias Springs (2) and heads in the direction of the Matroof Flour Mill (8). From this point, there are three options:

Trail 1:

From the Springs Parking Lot to the Crusader city and back (sites 11–17) – about 45 minutes' walk. This trail is marked in yellow.

Trail 2:

Palace of Agrippa II, the Underground Passages, and back to the Springs Parking Lot (sites 21–26) – about 45 minutes' walk. This trail is marked in purple.

Trail 3:

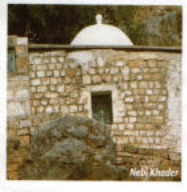
To the Banias Waterfall from the Springs Parking Lot (1) (sites 31–37) – about 90 minutes' walk. This trail is marked in blue.

Trail 4:

Begins at the junction of trails near the Banias Waterfall bridge (41) or from the lookout platform near the Banias Waterfall parking lot (43). This loop trail includes the suspended trail and the Banias Waterfall – about 45 minutes' walk and is marked in **red** (sites 1–43). The continuation of the trail to the Banias Waterfall is marked in blue (sites 35–37).

From the Springs Parking Lot (1): The walk begins at the entrance to the reserve. Opposite the souvenir shop, to the right of the path, is a small archaeological garden containing architectural finds from the ancient city of Banias. Continue along the edge of the pools of the **Banias Springs (2)**, up to the impressive ruins of the **Temple of Pan (3)**.

The Temple of Pan was constructed at the foot of a 70-meter-long, 40-meter-high cliff. The cliff was apparently none other than the back wall of a giant cave, whose roof collapsed and created rock terraces on which the temples and the ritual courtyards dedicated to Pan were constructed. The **Cave of Pan (3)** is a remnant of that former cave.



Excavations at the site, under the direction of Dr. Zvi Maoz of the Israel Antiquities Authority have uncovered only a part of the sacred complex, which continued to develop throughout the Roman period. The explanatory signs and artists' renderings illustrate well the daily activities at this site, a perfect place to understand the pagan world of the Land of Israel and Phoenicia.

At the bottom of the **Cave of Pan**, some 15 meters high and 20 meters wide, water sometimes collects at the level corresponding to the point where the **Banias Springs** emerge. From the area of the **Cave of Pan**, a white and green building can be spotted. This is the Grave of **Nebi Khader (4)** whose name in Arabic means "green" and is a holy man for the Druse and the Muslims.

The remains (5) below the grave of Nebi Khader apparently belong to a palace or a temple from the time of Herod.

Visitors who are content to limit their visit to the Temple of Pan may now return to the springs. Those who want to head **head** toward the Banias Waterfall, the Crusader city, or the Palace of Agrippa, should continue to the small Springs Bridge via one of the two following options:

Option 1: Return via the path on which you came up, pass the spring pools, and continue for about 100 meters until you reach the small Springs Bridge, which leads to the north bank of the stream.

Option 2: This option includes a moderate climb. Climb the wooden steps from the area of the cave at the foot of Nebi Khader to the lookout platform, which is part of an old building. From here there is a good view of the pools of the Banias Springs, parts of the Hula Valley and the Naphtali Mountains, and toward a beautiful natural oak grove. On the descent to the Hermon Stream, 15 meters to the left of the flight of steps, are remains of a wall containing the architectural element known as *opus reticulatum*, a net-like design. This appears to be a remnant of a palace or temple built in the days of Herod the Great. The path goes down steps to the north bank of the Hermon Stream, directly to the point opposite the small Springs Bridge, where it joins the path of Option 1, mentioned above. (From here you can return to the Springs Parking Lot and end your walk.)

Continue westward on the wide and comfortable trail, on the north side of the stream. To the north (on the right) the forested slopes of Mount Hermon and the large opening of the Si'on Stream can be seen. About 100 meters beyond the bridge, take the stone steps down to the channel of the strongly flowing Guvta Stream, whose waters emerge about 150 meters upstream. Willow trees flourish along the Guveta's banks, as well as fig and true laurel, with green briar vines entwined in them.

Continue under a concrete bridge over which the Qiryat-Shemona-Banias road passes. Immediately thereafter, you will pass beneath the arched **Roman Bridge (6)** near the junction of the Guvta and Hermon Streams. The bridge was constructed from large hewn stones. The inner part is covered with travertine (a material that derives from limestone dissolved in water). Passage beneath the Roman Bridge is via a wooden bridge over the water. There is a lovely view here of the quiet waters of the Guvta Stream as they meet the torrent of the Hermon Stream.

After crossing the stream, you will see ahead the remains of a Crusader tower that controlled the sole entrance to the city of Banias, and could block the entrance when necessary.

Continue walking in the shade of the large and beautiful poplar trees, with their intertwined grape vines. After a few meters you will arrive at the **Hydroelectric Station (7)**, which provided electricity for the village of Banias until 1967.

The path ascends a flight of stone stairs to the **Matroof Flour Mill (8)**, which runs on water power. In the past, the Matroof Mill served the people of the Golan Heights villages of Mas'adeh and Ein Kinya.

Water from the Hermon Stream is channeled to the roof of the mill via an aqueduct. From the end of the aqueduct, the water pours down a chimney. As it falls, it turns three waterwheels that operate three pairs of grinding stones. One pair of grinding stones is still in operation. Within the flour mill is an old olive oil press. Nearby, the Druse bake pita bread and sell it to visitors, together with labaneh (goat cheese) and za'atar (hyssop).

The water channel parallels the path, cascading down old agricultural terraces to form small artificial waterfalls. Walnut and poplar trees grow on the terraces, east of which a beautiful and well-preserved segment of the Crusader wall of Banias can be seen.

Two hundred meters from the Matroof Flour Mill, the path divides:

Left: The path leads to the remains of the Crusader city (Trail 1), to the Palace of Agrippa II (Trail 2), and returns to the main parking lot.

Right: This path follows the Hermon Stream down to the Banias Waterfall (Trail 3, described below).

Trail 1: Crusader Banias

After turning left, continue for about 100 meters and you will reach another junction. **Straight ahead** is the Crusader city (Trail 1). **Left** leads to the Palace of Agrippa II.

Continue along the northern bank of the Sa'ar Stream, under the bridge on which the main Banias-Mas'adeh road travels. Below are the remains of a ruined **concrete bridge (11)**, blown up by the Syrians as they retreated during the Six-Day War in June 1967. On one end, the bridge rests on an ancient square structure, the southwestern corner tower of the Crusader wall of Banias.

Climb the steps that go around the Crusader tower, and continue eas along the northern bank of the Sa'ar Stream, through a thicket of orienta plane, poplar, fig, oleander, and holy bramble. The path climbs a flight o stone steps toward the area in front of the grave of **Sheikh Sidi Ibrahin (13)**. This structure, with its domed roof, was constructed around a larg Mount Tabor oak. Near the grave is a *madafah*, a room for receivin guests. Sidi Ibrahim was the *matmakil* of the Banias market (the officia in charge of weights and measures) during the Ottoman period. Toda Druse and Arabs from all across Israel make pilgrimages to his tomb leaving prayer requests and holding banquets, singing and dancing. A fence surrounds the site. To enter, complete the trail and approach th tomb from the road.

Opposite the grave is the **Mamluke Gate (12)** of the Banias wall. (Safet considerations temporarily prohibit access to the gatehouse, but there i an impressive view of it from the path.) Near the entrance to the gate house is a large group of column segments, made out of limestone, granit and marble, and apparently originating in Roman Banias. The gatehous is the most impressive vestige of the medieval fortress of Banias. It is large, 11x7-meter room, with a seven-meter-high ceiling and walls tha are some two meters thick. The cruciform ceiling is completely intact.

The gatehouse has two entrances. One faces the interior of the fortres and the other faces the outside. It guarded the approach from the Sa'a Stream, which passes the foot of the southern wall of the fortress. A bridge once connected the gatehouse to the far bank of the stream, bu it was destroyed at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Above the outer entrance to the gatehouse, an Arabic inscription is carved on a white limestone tablet. Two large rooms were constructed on the eastern side of the gatehouse.

From the Mamluke gatehouse, the path continues on the northern bank of the Sa'ar Stream, and along the southern wall of the Banias Fortress The path reaches the southeastern tower of the wall and passes it on the north in the **moat (15)** that parallels the length of the eastern wall The moat is approximately eight meters wide. On one side it is bounded by the **Crusader wall (14)**, and on the other side by a support wall. At the northern corner of the wall, the remains of a large Syrian house can be seen, constructed atop the **corner tower (16)** of the fortress.

A little further on is a one-way revolving gate through which visitors can exit to the Banias-Mas'adeh road (road 99). The main gate of the Hermon Stream Reserve and the Springs Parking Lot (where the walk began) is across the road.

You can now return to the **Springs Parking Lot (1)** and continue your walk to the Banias Waterfall. Or, if you want to see the remains of the Palace of Agrippa II (Trail 2), you can save yourself another walk through the Springs Parking Lot by turning left before the one-way turnstile that leads to the road. We recommend crossing the ruins quickly to reach the **Undergrounc Passages (22)**, and beginning your tour at that point, then returning to the turnstile gate as described in this brochure under Trail 2. This may seem a bit complicated, but it will save some walking.

(Continuation of Trail 1): Cross the road carefully. Near the entrance to the reserve you will see Excavation **Area B (17)**. Remains were discovered here of a large and magnificent structure with columns whose bases are heart-shaped. The structure, which has been dated to the reign of Herod Philip, seems to have been the splendid type of gateway knowr as a propylaea, which led to the area of the temple near the cave. The remains of a Byzantine church were also discovered in this area. In one of its rooms the statue of Jesus was kept that was mentioned in the section entitled "Remains of the Past."

Trail 2: The Palace of Agrippa II

You are now at the junction of the trails mentioned at the beginning of Trail 1. Turn left toward the **Palace of Agrippa II (2)**.

The tour begins at the **Underground Passages (22)**. The present-day road passes over one of the arches here, which has not been restored since Roman times, and so at this point you are passing beneath the main road that ascends from Banias to Mount Hermon! Note the exemplary quality of construction of the arches.

From the **lookout platform (23)** you can see the remains of the city of Herod Philip and Agrippa II. The Israel Antiquities Authority is carrying out archaeological excavations here in cooperation with the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and research institutions from the U.S. and from Greece. The excavations, originally directed by the late Prof. Vasilis Tsafris, have been underway since 1988.

A public building, constructed at the beginning of the first century CE, was uncovered at the site, which archaeologists believe was the **Palace of Agrippa II (24)**. It extended over more than 2000 square meters, and was one of the largest and most magnificent buildings ever built in the Land of Israel. It is located in a beautiful corner of nature, between the Hermon Stream and the canyon of the Sa'ar Stream, below the Banias Springs. A number of channels led water from the spring to the building. During the Byzantine period, many stones were taken from this building to build other structures, and part of the palace became a bathhouse. Near the remains of the bathhouse, a structure dating from the eleventh century CE was discovered, which was apparently used as a **synagogue (25)**.

From here, continue toward the exit and the Springs Parking Lot (1). On your way you will pass the remains of the Cardo (26) - the colonnaded street that crossed the city from north to south. The street began on the north bank of the Sa'ar Stream, and reached Excavation Area B (17) near the Springs Parking Lot. The Cardo was constructed during the period of Philip and Agrippa II. During the Byzantine period, additional streets were constructed that led into the Cardo.

Trail 3: To the Officers' Pool and the Banias Waterfall

Note: Have transportation waiting for you at the other end of this trail (at the Waterfall Parking Lot).

Trail 3 begins at the **Matroof Flour Mill (8)**. At the junction of trails about 200 meters beyond the mill, the trail to the right leads to the waterfall. The trail descends along the Hermon Stream for about 50 meters, and then crosses the stream to its western bank via a bridge. About 50 meters after crossing the stream, the trail reaches the **Officers' Pool (31)**. This is the point where the Ein Hilu Spring emerges, whose water is warmer than the Banias Spring (everything is relative...). The Syrians built a concrete pool over the spring, which served the Syrian soldiers until the Six-Day War. Bubbles rising from the bottom of the pool reveal the points where the spring emerges. Today the pool is a natural habitat for fish and unique invertebrates.

Entrance to the pool, like the rest of the stream, is prohibited!

Continue south from the Officers' Pool and cross the stream via a bridge on the southeastern side. (When rains have caused the stream to flood the path, you can take the upper path, which passes above the eastern bank of the stream.) The trail then intersects a fenced-off dirt road. This is the point where the pipeline that once carried oil from Iraq to Sidon in Lebanon (the TAP Line) crosses the stream from east to west. The pipeline is buried beneath the streambed.

The trail continues on the eastern bank in a stone aqueduct that channeled water to the **flour mills of Umm Ra'i (32)** which means "mother of the shepherd", and **Jedida (33)**, which means "new." The remains of these now-abandoned mills can be seen on the way.

About 300 meters beyond this point, you will reach the **Waterfall Lookout (34)**, with its impressive view of the Banias Waterfall. The path descends and crosses the stream to its western bank. Continue to the right, upstream, to the **Banias Waterfall (35)** that cascades into a large pool (Swimming is prohibited!). From here, the trail ascends a flight of stairs to the **lookout (36)** above the edge of the canyon. Explanatory plaques have been installed at the top to help you orient yourself. The trail now leads to the **Waterfall Parking Lot (37)**, the end of your walk.

Trail 4 The Suspended Trail

The suspended trail is a special experience – a walk through a narrow basalt canyon above the rushing Hermon Stream.

Please make sure you take the trail upriver (against the flow), as directed by the signs. That direction gives you a more impressive view and also facilitates visitor traffic on the suspended trail.

A. From the Banias Springs

Coming from the Banias Springs, cross the bridge over the Hermon Stream before the Banias Waterfall. Turn left at the trail junction **(41)** and walk about 250 meters to the **beginning of the suspended trail (42)**. This unique trail, which is about 100 meters long, is suspended from one of the basalt walls of the high, narrow canyon through which the Hermon Stream flows. Along the way it treats you to a view of stream-bank vegetation, caves and frothy cascades.

At the end of the suspended trail, walk upstream, passing the bridge and the trail junction **(41)** and you'll reach the **Banias Waterfall (35)**. After visiting the waterfall, climb the steps to the **Waterfall Lookout (36)** and the **Waterfall Parking Lot (37)**.

B. Coming from the Waterfall Parking Lot

The suspended trail begins **(43)** at the lookout near the Waterfall Parking Lot. Turn right at the lot, among travertine boulders, down the slope leading to the suspended trail. Travertine is rock created by chalk deposits dissolved by flowing stream water. The travertine on the slope shows that the Hermon Stream once flowed through a different channel.

Mount Tabor oaks (*Quercus ithaburensis*) and Kermes oak (*Quercus calliprinos*) grow along the trail. In the north you can clearly see the slope of Mount Hermon and the spur on which the Nimrod Fortress sits. To the south is an impressive view of the lower Hermon Stream.

At the bottom of the slope the trail splits in two. The trail to the right continues downstream and comes out at the She'ar Yishuv one-way turnstile. The trail from the left serves walkers coming from the Banias Springs. Go down the steps that leading straight to the basalt canyon at the **beginning of the suspended trail (42)**. Continue to the Banias Waterfall and the Waterfall Parking Lot as described in section A.

More Options for Walks in the Area

1. **From the Banias Waterfall to the Springs** Trail 3 in the opposite direction.
2. **From the Banias Waterfall to the She'ar Yishuv Bridge**: Trail 1165 on the Society for the Protection of Nature (SPNI) Trail Map, Upper Galilee, marked in black.
3. **From the Nimrod Fortress National Park to the Hermon Stream Nature Reserve**: Trail 1151 on the SPNI Trail Map, Upper Galilee, marked in green. You can purchase a combined ticket to both sites.

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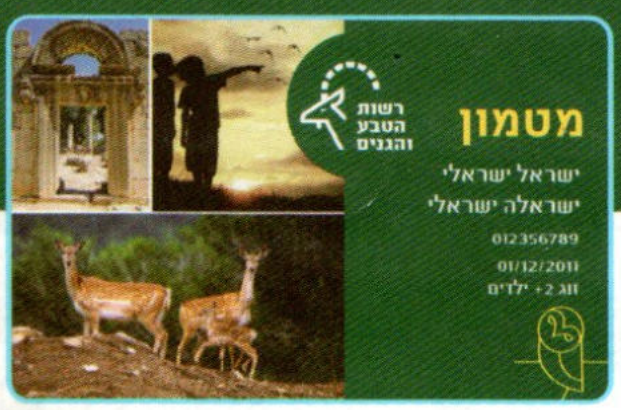

Nearby Sites:

Nimrod Fortress National Park
about 10 minutes' drive

You are here

Tel Dan Nature Reserve
about 5 minutes' drive

Nahal 'Iyyon Nature Reserve
about 20 minutes' drive

www.parks.org.il | *3639 |

Hermon Stream (Banias) Nature Reserve, Tel: 04-6902577

Banias Waterfall - suspended trail, Tel: 04-6950272